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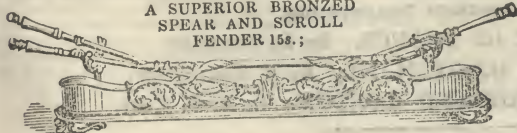
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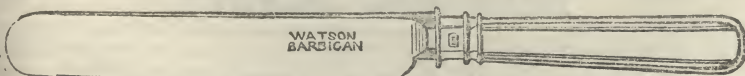
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Dessert Spoons.....	12 6 "	16 6 "	1 5 0 "	Sauce Ladles.....	1 9 "	2 3 "	3 9 "
" Forks	12 6 "	16 6 "	1 5 0 "	Soup "	6 6 "	8 0 "	11 0 "
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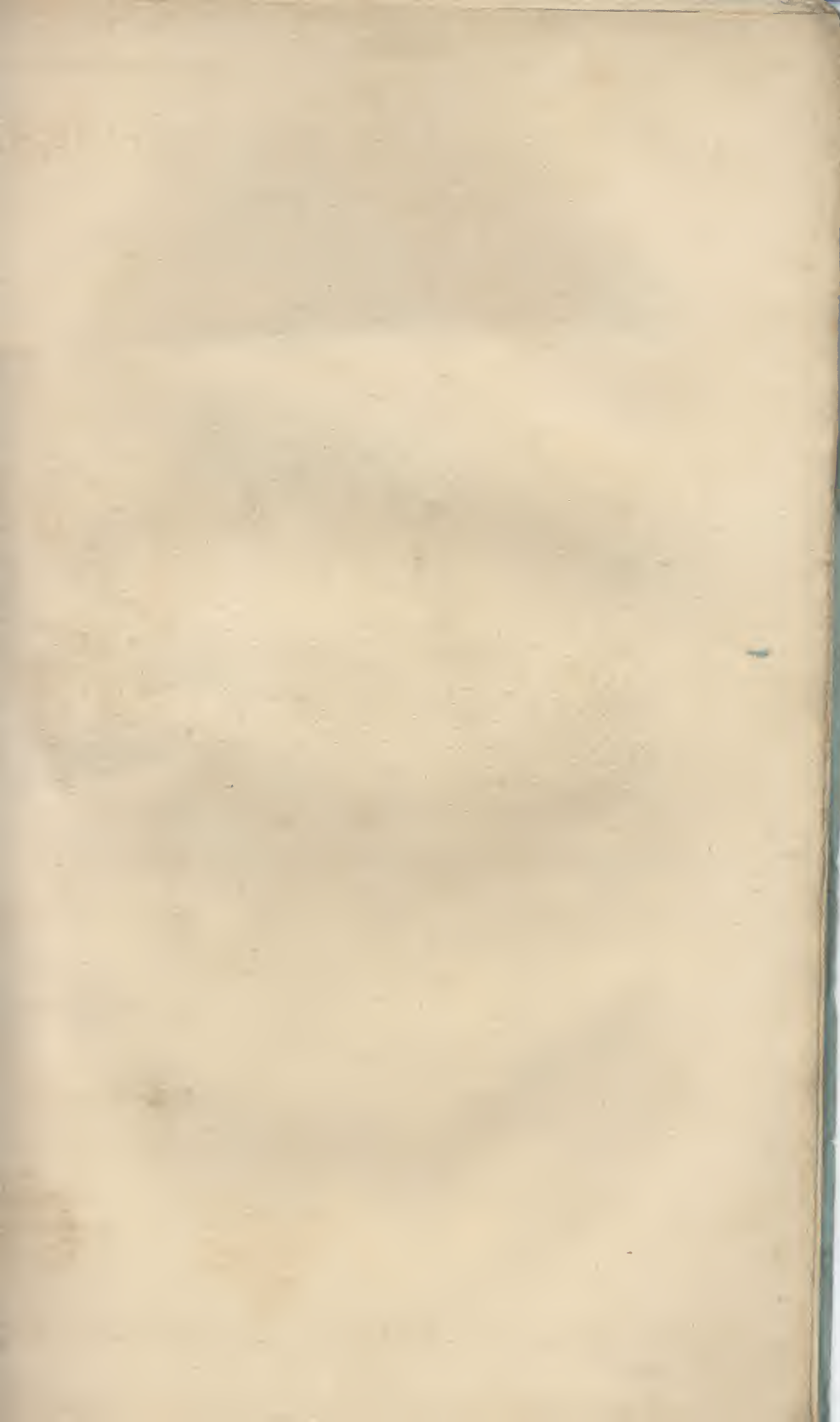
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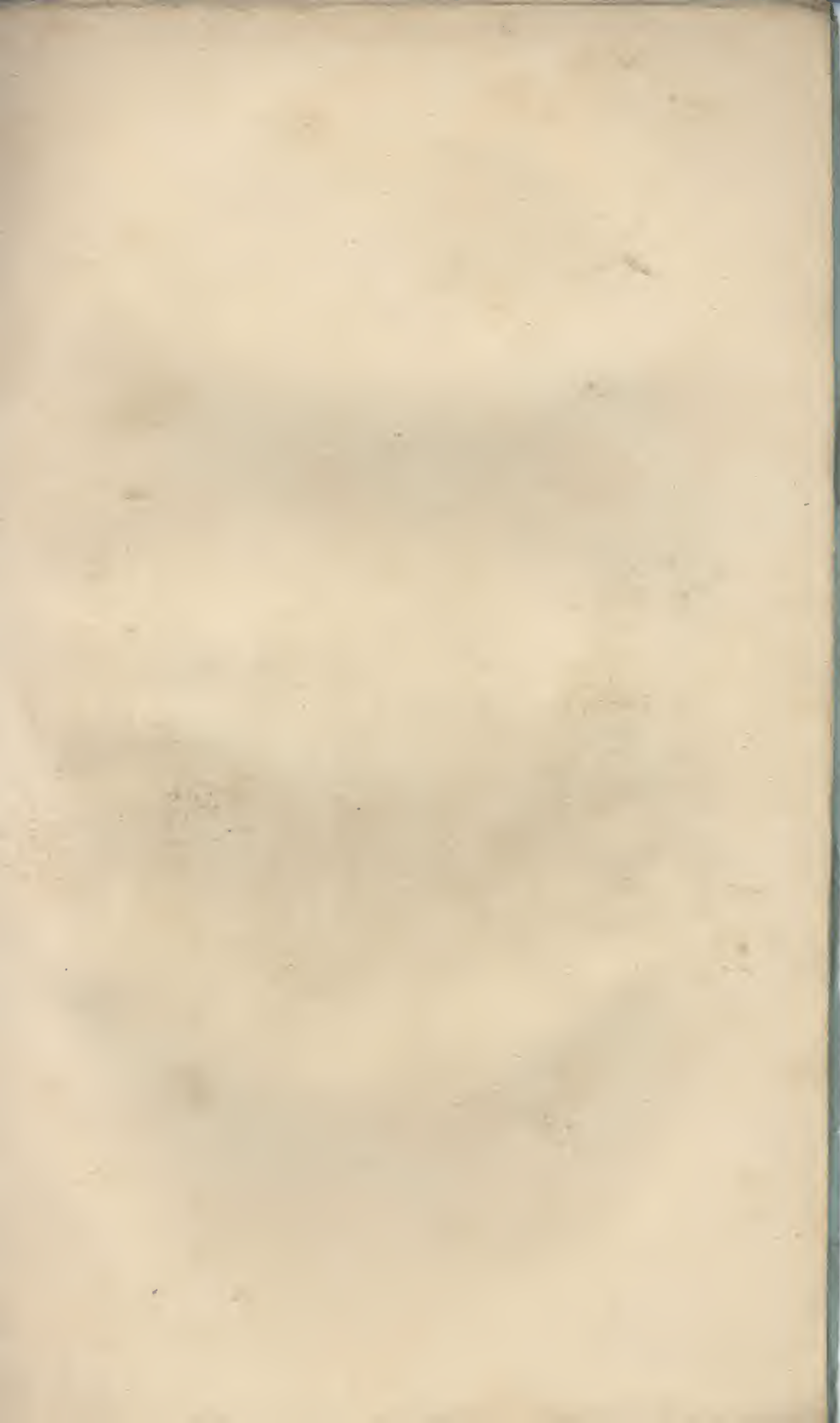
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Mr. Pinch and Ruth, unconscious of a visitor.





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CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONTAINING SOME FURTHER PARTICULARS OF THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY OF THE PINCHES; WITH STRANGE NEWS FROM THE CITY, NARROWLY CONCERNING TOM.

PLEASANT little Ruth! Cheerful, tidy, bustling, quiet little Ruth! No doll's-house ever yielded greater delight to its young mistress, than little Ruth derived from her glorious dominion over the triangular parlour and the two small bed-rooms.

To be Tom's housekeeper. What dignity! Housekeeping, upon the commonest terms, associated itself with elevated responsibilities of all sorts and kinds; but housekeeping for Tom, implied the utmost complication of grave trusts and mighty charges. Well might she take the keys out of the little chiffonnier which held the tea and sugar; and out of the two little damp cupboards down by the fire-place, where the very black beetles got mouldy, and had the shine taken out of their backs by envious mildew; and jingle them upon a ring before Tom's eyes when he came down to breakfast! Well might she, laughing musically, put them up in that blessed little pocket of her's with a merry pride! For it was such a grand novelty to be mistress of anything, that if she had been the most relentless and despotic of all little housekeepers, she might have pleaded just that much for her excuse, and have been honourably acquitted.

So far from being despotic, however, there was a coyness about her very way of pouring out the tea, which Tom quite revelled in. And when she asked him what he would like to have for dinner, and faltered out "chops" as a reasonably good suggestion after their last night's successful supper, Tom grew quite facetious and rallied her desperately.

"I don't know Tom," said his sister, blushing, "I am not quite confident, but I think I could make a beef-steak pudding, if I tried, Tom."

"In the whole catalogue of cookery, there is nothing I should like so much as a beef-steak pudding!" cried Tom: slapping his leg to give the greater force to this reply.

"Yes, dear, that's excellent! But if it should happen not to come quite right the first time," his sister faltered; "if it should happen not to be a pudding exactly, but should turn out a stew, or a soup, or something of that sort, you'll not be vexed Tom, will you?"

The serious way in which she looked at Tom; the way in which Tom looked at her; and the way in which she gradually broke into a merry laugh at her own expense; would have enchanted you.

"Why," said Tom, "this is capital. It gives us a new, and quite an uncommon interest in the dinner. We put into a lottery for a beef-steak pudding, and it is impossible to say what we may get. We may make some wonderful discovery, perhaps, and produce such a dish as never was known before."

"I shall not be at all surprised if we do, Tom," returned his sister, still laughing merrily, "or if it should prove to be such a dish as we

shall not feel very anxious to produce again ; but the meat must come out of the saucepan at last, somehow or other, you know. We can't cook it into nothing at all ; that's a great comfort. So if you like to venture, *I* will."

"I have not the least doubt," rejoined Tom, "that it will come out an excellent pudding ; or at all events, I am sure that I shall think it so. There is naturally something so handy and brisk about you, Ruth, that if you said you could make a bowl of faultless turtle soup, I should believe you."

And Tom was right. She was precisely that sort of person. Nobody ought to have been able to resist her coaxing manner ; and nobody had any business to try. Yet she never seemed to know it was her manner at all. That was the best of it.

Well ! she washed up the breakfast cups, chatting away the whole time, and telling Tom all sorts of anecdotes about the brass and copper funder ; put everything in its place ; made the room as neat as herself ; —you must not suppose its shape was half as neat as her's though, or anything like it ; and brushed Tom's old hat round and round and round again, until it was as sleek as Mr. Pecksniff. Then she discovered, all in a moment, that Tom's shirt-collar was frayed at the edge ; and flying up stairs for a needle and thread, came flying down again with her thimble on, and set it right with wonderful expertness ; never once sticking the needle into his face, although she was humming his pet tune from first to last, and beating time with the fingers of her left hand upon his neckcloth. She had no sooner done this, than off she was again ; and there she stood once more, as brisk and busy as a bee, tying that compact little chin of her's into an equally compact little bonnet : intent on bustling out to the butcher's, without a minute's loss of time ; and inviting Tom to come and see the steak cut with his own eyes. As to Tom, he was ready to go anywhere : so off they trotted, arm-in-arm, as nimbly as you please : saying to each other what a quiet street it was to lodge in, and how very cheap, and what an airy situation.

To see the butcher slap the steak, before he laid it on the block, and gave his knife a sharpening, was to forget breakfast instantly. It was agreeable, too—it really was—to see him cut it off, so smooth and juicy. There was nothing savage in the act, although the knife was large and keen ; it was a piece of art, high art ; there was delicacy of touch, clearness of tone, skilful handling of the subject, fine shading. It was the triumph of mind over matter ; quite.

Perhaps the greenest cabbage-leaf ever grown in a garden was wrapped about this steak, before it was delivered over to Tom. But the butcher had a sentiment for his business, and knew how to refine upon it. When he saw Tom putting the cabbage-leaf into his pocket awkwardly, he begged to be allowed to do it for him ; "for meat," he said, with some emotion, "must be humoured, not drove."

Back they went to the lodgings again, after they had bought some eggs, and flour, and such small matters ; and Tom sat gravely down to write, at one end of the parlour table, while Ruth prepared to make the pudding, at the other end : for there was nobody in the house but an

old woman (the landlord being a mysterious sort of man, who went out early in the morning, and was scarcely ever seen); and, saving in mere household drudgery, they waited on themselves.

"What are you writing, Tom?" inquired his sister, laying her hand upon his shoulder.

"Why, you see, my dear," said Tom, leaning back in his chair, and looking up in her face, "I am very anxious, of course, to obtain some suitable employment; and, before Mr. Westlock comes this afternoon, I think I may as well prepare a little description of myself and my qualifications; such as he could shew to any friend of his."

"You had better do the same for me, Tom, also," said his sister, casting down her eyes. "I should dearly like to keep house for you, and take care of you, always, Tom; but we are not rich enough for that."

"We are not rich," returned Tom, "certainly; and we may be much poorer. But we will not part, if we can help it. No, no: we will make up our minds, Ruth, that, unless we are so very unfortunate as to render me quite sure that you would be better off away from me than with me, we will battle it out together. I am certain we shall be happier if we can battle it out together. Don't you think we shall?"

"Think, Tom!"

"Oh, tut, tut!" interposed Tom, tenderly. "You must n't cry."

"No, no; I won't, Tom. But you can't afford it, dear. You can't, indeed."

"We don't know that," said Tom. "How are we to know that yet awhile, and without trying? Lord bless my soul!"; Tom's energy became quite grand; "There is no knowing what may happen, if we try hard. And I am sure we can live contentedly upon a very little—if we can only get it."

"Yes: that I am sure we can, Tom."

"Why, then," said Tom, "we must try for it. My friend, John Westlock, is a capital fellow, and very shrewd and intelligent. I'll take his advice. We'll talk it over with him—both of us together. You'll like John very much, when you come to know him, I am certain. Don't cry, don't cry. *You* make a beef-steak pudding, indeed!" said Tom, giving her a gentle push. "Why, you have n't boldness enough for a dumpling!"

"You *will* call it a pudding, Tom. Mind! I told you not!"

"I may as well call it that, 'till it proves to be something else," said Tom. "Oh, you are going to work in earnest, are you?"

Aye, aye! That she was. And in such pleasant earnest, moreover, that Tom's attention wandered from his writing, every moment. First, she tripped down stairs into the kitchen for the flour, then for the pie-board, then for the eggs, then for the butter, then for a jug of water, then for the rolling-pin, then for a pudding-basin, then for the pepper, then for the salt: making a separate journey for everything, and laughing every time she started off afresh. When all the materials were collected, she was horrified to find she had no apron on, and so ran *up* stairs, by way of variety, to fetch it. She didn't put it on up stairs, but came dancing down with it in her hand; and being one of those little women to whom an apron is a most becoming little vanity, it took

an immense time to arrange ; having to be carefully smoothed down beneath—Oh, heaven, what a wicked little stomacher !—and to be gathered up into little plaits by the strings before it could be tied, and to be tapped, rebuked, and wheedled, at the pockets, before it would set right, which at last it did, and when it did—but never mind ; this is a sober chronicle ; Oh, never mind ! And then there were her cuffs to be tucked up, for fear of flour ; and she had a little ring to pull off her finger, which wouldn't come off (foolish little ring !) ; and during the whole of these preparations she looked demurely every now and then at Tom, from under her dark eye-lashes, as if they were all a part of the pudding, and indispensable to its composition.

For the life and soul of him, Tom could get no further in his writing than, “ A respectable young man aged thirty-five,” and this, notwithstanding the show she made of being supernaturally quiet, and going about on tiptoe, lest she should disturb him : which only served as an additional means of distracting his attention, and keeping it upon her.

“ Tom,” she said at last, in high glee. “ Tom ! ”

“ What now ? ” said Tom, repeating to himself, “ aged thirty-five ! ”

“ Will you look here a moment, please.”

As if he had n't been looking all the time !

“ I am going to begin, Tom. Don't you wonder why I butter the inside of the basin ? ” said his busy little sister. “ Eh, Tom ? ”

“ Not more than you do, I dare say,” replied Tom, laughing. “ For I believe you don't know anything about it.”

“ What an infidel you are, Tom ! How else do you think it would turn out easily when it was done ? For a civil-engineer and land-surveyor not to know that. My goodness, Tom ! ”

It was wholly out of the question to try to write. Tom lined out “ A respectable young man, aged thirty-five ; ” and sat looking on, pen in hand, with one of the most loving smiles imaginable.

Such a busy little woman as she was ! So full of self-importance, and trying so hard not to smile, or seem uncertain about anything ! It was a perfect treat to Tom to see her with her brows knit, and her rosy lips pursed up, kneading away at the crust, rolling it out, cutting it up into strips, lining the basin with it, shaving it off fine round the rim ; chopping up the steak into small pieces, raining down pepper and salt upon them, packing them into the basin, pouring in cold water for gravy ; and never venturing to steal a look in his direction, lest her gravity should be disturbed ; until at last, the basin being quite full and only wanting the top crust, she clapped her hands, all covered with paste and flour, at Tom, and burst-out heartily into such a charming little laugh of triumph, that the pudding need have had no other seasoning to commend it to the taste of any reasonable man on earth.

“ Where's the pudding ? ” said Tom. For he was cutting his jokes, Tom was.

“ Where ! ” she answered, holding it up with both hands. “ Look at it ! ”

“ *That* a pudding ! ” said Tom.

“ It will be, you stupid fellow, when it's covered in,” returned his sister. Tom still pretending to look incredulous, she gave him a tap on

the head with the rolling-pin, and still laughing merrily, had returned to the composition of the top-crust, when she started and turned very red. Tom started, too, for following her eyes, he saw John Westlock in the room.

"Why, my goodness, John! How did *you* come in?"

"I beg pardon," said John—"your sister's pardon especially: but I met an old lady at the street door, who requested me to enter here; and as you didn't hear me knock, and the door was open, I made bold to do so. I hardly know," said John, with a smile, "why any of us should be disconcerted at my having accidentally intruded upon such an agreeable domestic occupation, so very agreeably and skilfully pursued; but I must confess that *I* am. Tom, will you kindly come to my relief?"

"Mr. John Westlock," said Tom. "My sister."

"I hope, that as the sister of so old a friend," said John, laughing, "you will have the goodness to detach your first impressions of me from my unfortunate entrance."

"My sister is not indisposed perhaps to say the same to you on her own behalf," retorted Tom.

John said, of course, that this was quite unnecessary, for he had been transfixed in silent admiration; and he held out his hand to Miss Pinch; who could not take it, however, by reason of the flour and paste upon her own. This, which might seem calculated to increase the general confusion and render matters worse, had in reality the best effect in the world, for neither of them could help laughing; and so they both found themselves on easy terms immediately.

"I am delighted to see you," said Tom. "Sit down."

"I can only think of sitting down, on one condition," returned his friend: "and that is, that your sister goes on with the pudding, as if you were still alone."

"That I am sure she will," said Tom. "On one other condition, and that is, that you stay and help us to eat it."

Poor little Ruth was seized with a palpitation of the heart when Tom committed this appalling indiscretion, for she felt that if the dish turned out a failure, she never would be able to hold up her head before John Westlock again. Quite unconscious of her state of mind, John accepted the invitation with all imaginable heartiness; and after a little more pleasantry concerning this same pudding, and the tremendous expectations he made belief to entertain of it, she blushing resumed her occupation, and he took a chair.

"I am here much earlier than I intended, Tom; but I will tell you what brings me, and I think I can answer for your being glad to hear it. Is that anything you wish to show me?"

"Oh dear no!" cried Tom, who had forgotten the blotted scrap of paper in his hand, until this inquiry brought it to his recollection. "'A respectable young man, aged thirty-five'—The beginning of a description of myself. That's all."

"I don't think you will have occasion to finish it, Tom. But how is it, you never told me you had friends in London?"

Tom looked at his sister with all his might; and certainly his sister looked with all her might at him.

"Friends in London!" echoed Tom.

"Ah!" said Westlock, "to be sure."

"Have *you* any friends in London, Ruth, my dear?" asked Tom.

"No, Tom."

"I am very happy to hear that *I* have," said Tom, "but it's news to me. I never knew it. They must be capital people to keep a secret, John."

"You shall judge for yourself," returned the other. "Seriously, Tom, here is the plain state of the case. As I was sitting at breakfast this morning, there comes a knock at my door."

"On which you cried out, very loud, 'Come in!'" suggested Tom.

"So I did. And the person who knocked, not being a respectable young man aged thirty-five, from the country, came in when he was invited, Tom, instead of standing gaping and staring about him on the landing. Well! when he came in, I found he was a stranger; a grave, business-like, sedate-looking, stranger. 'Mr. Westlock?' said he. 'That is my name,' said I. 'The favour of a few words with you?' said he. 'Pray be seated, sir,' said I."

Here John stopped for an instant, to glance towards the table, where Tom's sister, listening attentively, was still busy with the basin, which by this time made a noble appearance. Then he resumed:

"The pudding having taken a chair, Tom"—

"What!" cried Tom.

"Having taken a chair."

"You said a pudding."

"No, no," replied John, colouring rather; "a chair. The idea of a stranger coming into my rooms at half-past eight o'clock in the morning, and taking a pudding! Having taken a chair, Tom a chair—amazed me by opening the conversation thus: 'I believe you are acquainted, sir, with Mr. Thomas Pinch?'"

"No!" cried Tom.

"His very words, I assure you. I told him that I was. Did I know where you were at present residing? Yes. In London? Yes. He had casually heard, in a roundabout way, that you had left your situation with Mr. Pecksniff. Was that the fact? Yes, it was. Did you want another? Yes, you did."

"Certainly," said Tom, nodding his head.

"Just what I impressed upon him. You may rest assured that I set that point beyond the possibility of any mistake, and gave him distinctly to understand that he might make up his mind about it. Very well. 'Then,' said he, 'I think I can accommodate him.'"

Tom's sister stopped short.

"Lord bless me!" cried Tom. "Ruth, my dear, 'think I can accommodate him.'"

"Of course I begged him," pursued John Westlock, glancing at Tom's sister, who was not less eager in her interest than Tom himself, "to proceed, and said that I would undertake to see you immediately. He replied that he had very little to say, being a man of few words, but such as it was, it was to the purpose: and so, indeed, it turned out: for he immediately went on to tell me that a friend of his was in want of a

kind of secretary and librarian ; and that although the salary was small, being only a hundred pounds a year, with neither board nor lodging, still the duties were not heavy, and there the post was. Vacant, and ready for your acceptance."

"Good gracious me!" cried Tom; "a hundred pounds a year! My dear John! Ruth, my love! A hundred pounds a year!"

"But the strangest part of the story," resumed John Westlock, laying his hand on Tom's wrist, to bespeak his attention, and repress his ecstasies for the moment: "the strangest part of the story, Miss Pinch, is this. I don't know this man from Adam; neither does this man know Tom."

"He can't," said Tom, in great perplexity, "if he's a Londoner. I don't know any one in London."

"And on my observing," John resumed, still keeping his hand upon Tom's wrist, "that I had no doubt he would excuse the freedom I took, in inquiring who directed him to me; how he came to know of the change which had taken place in my friend's position; and how he came to be acquainted with my friend's peculiar fitness for such an office as he had described; he drily said that he was not at liberty to enter into any explanations."

"Not at liberty to enter into any explanations!" repeated Tom, drawing a long breath.

"'I must be perfectly aware,' he said," John added, "'that to any person who had ever been in Mr. Pecksniff's neighbourhood, Mr. Thomas Pinch and his acquirements were as well known as the Church steeple, or the Blue Dragon,'"

"The Blue Dragon!" replied Tom, staring alternately at his friend and his sister.

"Aye; think of that! He spoke as familiarly of the Blue Dragon, I give you my word, as if he had been Mark Tapley. I opened my eyes, I can tell you, when he did so; but I could not fancy I had ever seen the man before, although he said with a smile, 'You know the Blue Dragon, Mr. Westlock; you kept it up there, once or twice, yourself.' Kept it up there! So I did. You remember, Tom?"

Tom nodded with great significance, and, falling into a state of deeper perplexity than before, observed that this was the most unaccountable and extraordinary circumstance he had ever heard of in his life.

"Unaccountable!" his friend repeated. "I became afraid of the man. Though it was broad day, and bright sunshine, I was positively afraid of him. I declare I half suspected him to be a supernatural visitor, and not a mortal, until he took out a commonplace description of pocket-book, and handed me this card."

"Mr. Fips," said Tom, reading it aloud. "Austin Friars. Austin Friars sounds ghostly, John."

"Fips don't, I think," was John's reply. "But there he lives, Tom, and there he expects us to call this morning. And now you know as much of this strange incident as I do, upon my honour."

Tom's face, between his exultation in the hundred pounds a year, and his wonder at this narration, was only to be equalled by the face of his sister, on which there sat the very best expression of blooming surprise that any painter could have wished to see. What the beef-steak pudding

would have come to, if it had not been by this time finished, astrology itself could hardly determine.

"Tom," said Ruth, after a little hesitation, "Perhaps Mr. Westlock, in his friendship for you, knows more of this than he chooses to tell."

"No, indeed!" cried John, eagerly. "It is not so, I assure you. I wish it were. I cannot take credit to myself, Miss Pinch, for any such thing. All that I know, or, so far as I can judge, am likely to know, I have told you."

"Could n't you know more if you thought proper!" said Ruth, scraping the pie-board industriously.

"No," retorted John. "Indeed, no. It is very ungenerous in you, to be so suspicious of me, when I repose implicit faith in you. I have unbounded confidence in the pudding, Miss Pinch."

She laughed at this, but they soon got back into a serious vein, and discussed the subject with profound gravity. Whatever else was obscure in the business, it appeared to be quite plain that Tom was offered a salary of one hundred pounds a year; and this being the main point, the surrounding obscurity rather set it off than otherwise.

Tom, being in a great flutter, wished to start for Austin Friars instantly, but they waited nearly an hour, by John's advice, before they departed. Tom made himself as spruce as he could before leaving home, and when John Westlock, through the half-opened parlour door, had glimpses of that brave little sister brushing the collar of his coat in the passage, taking up loose stitches in his gloves, and hovering lightly about and about him, touching him up here and there in the height of her quaint, little, old-fashioned tidiness, he called to mind the fancy-portraits of her on the wall of the Pecksniffian work-room, and decided with uncommon indignation that they were gross libels, and not half pretty enough: though, as hath been mentioned in its place, the artists always made those sketches beautiful, and he had drawn at least a score of them with his own hands.

"Tom," he said, as they were walking along, "I begin to think you must be somebody's son."

"I suppose I am," Tom answered in his quiet way.

"But I mean somebody's of consequence."

"Bless your heart," replied Tom. "My poor father was of no consequence, nor my mother either."

"You remember them perfectly, then?"

"Remember them? oh dear yes. My poor mother was the last. She died when Ruth was a mere baby, and then we both became a charge upon the savings of that good old grandmother I used to tell you of. You remember! Oh! There's nothing romantic in our history, John."

"Very well," said John in quiet despair. "Then there is no way of accounting for my visitor of this morning. So we'll not try, Tom."

They did try notwithstanding, and never left off trying until they got to Austin Friars, where, in a very dark passage on the first floor, oddly situated at the back of a house, across some leads, they found a little blear-eyed glass door up in one corner, with Mr. Firs painted on it in characters which were meant to be transparent. There was also a wicked old sideboard hiding in the gloom hard by, meditating

designs upon the ribs of visitors ; and an old mat, worn into lattice work, which, being useless as a mat (even if anybody could have seen it, which was impossible), had for many years directed its industry into another channel, and regularly tripped up every one of Mr. Fips's clients.

Mr. Fips, hearing a violent concussion between a human hat and his office door, was apprised, by the usual means of communication, that somebody had come to call upon him, and giving that somebody admission, observed that it was "rather dark."

"Dark indeed," John whispered in Tom Pinch's ear. "Not a bad place to dispose of a countryman in, I should think, Tom."

Tom had been already turning over in his mind the possibility of their having been tempted into that region to furnish forth a pie ; but the sight of Mr. Fips, who was small and spare, and looked peaceable, and wore black shorts and powder, dispelled his doubts.

"Walk in," said Mr. Fips.

They walked in. And a mighty yellow-jaundiced little office Mr. Fips had of it : with a great, black, sprawling splash upon the floor in one corner, as if some old clerk had cut his throat there, years ago, and had let out ink instead of blood.

"I have brought my friend Mr. Pinch, sir," said John Westlock.

"Be pleased to sit," said Mr. Fips.

They occupied the two chairs, and Mr. Fips took the office stool, from the stuffing whereof he drew forth a piece of horsehair of immense length, which he put into his mouth with a great appearance of appetite.

He looked at Tom Pinch curiously, but with an entire freedom from any such expression as could be reasonably construed into an unusual display of interest. After a short silence, during which Mr. Fips was so perfectly unembarrassed as to render it manifest that he could have broken it sooner without hesitation, if he had felt inclined to do so, he asked if Mr. Westlock had made his offer fully known to Mr. Pinch.

John answered in the affirmative.

"And you think it worth your while, sir, do you ?" Mr. Fips inquired of Tom.

"I think it a piece of great good fortune, sir," said Tom. "I am exceedingly obliged to you for the offer."

"Not to me," said Mr. Fips. "I act upon instructions."

"To your friend, sir, then," said Tom. "To the gentleman with whom I am to engage, and whose confidence I shall endeavour to deserve. When he knows me better, sir, I hope he will not lose his good opinion of me. He will find me punctual and vigilant, and anxious to do what is right. That I think I can answer for, and so," looking towards him, "can Mr. Westlock."

"Most assuredly," said John.

Mr. Fips appeared to have some little difficulty in resuming the conversation. To relieve himself, he took up the wafer-stamp, and began stamping capital F's all over his legs.

"The fact is," said Mr. Fips, "that my friend is not, at this present moment, in town."

Tom's countenance fell ; for he thought this equivalent to telling him

that his appearance did not answer ; and that Fips must look out for somebody else.

"When do you think he will be in town, sir?" he asked.

"I can't say ; it's impossible to tell. I really have no idea. But," said Fips, taking off a very deep impression of the wafer-stamp upon the calf of his left leg, and looking steadily at Tom, "I don't know that it's a matter of much consequence."

Poor Tom inclined his head deferentially, but appeared to doubt that.

"I say," repeated Mr. Fips, "that I don't know it's a matter of much consequence. The business lies entirely between yourself and me, Mr. Pinch. With reference to your duties, I can set you going ; and with reference to your salary, I can pay it. Weekly," said Mr. Fips, putting down the wafer-stamp, and looking at John Westlock and Tom Pinch by turns, "weekly ; in this office ; at any time between the hours of four and five o'clock in the afternoon." As Mr. Fips said this, he made up his face as if he were going to whistle. But he didn't.

"You are very good," said Tom, whose countenance was now suffused with pleasure : "and nothing can be more satisfactory or straightforward. My attendance will be required—"

"From half-past nine to four o'clock or so, I should say," interrupted Mr. Fips. "About that."

"I did not mean the hours of attendance," retorted Tom, "which are light and easy, I am sure ; but the place."

"Oh, the place ! The place is in the Temple."

Tom was delighted.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Fips, "you would like to see the place ?"

"Oh dear !" cried Tom. "I shall only be too glad to consider myself engaged, if you will allow me ; without any further reference to the place."

"You may consider yourself engaged, by all means," said Mr. Fips : "you couldn't meet me at the Temple-Gate in Fleet-street, in an hour from this time, I suppose, could you ?"

Certainly Tom could.

"Good," said Mr. Fips, rising. "Then I will show you the place ; and you can begin your attendance to-morrow morning. In an hour, therefore. I shall see you, too, Mr. Westlock ? Very good. Take care how you go. It's rather dark."

With this remark, which seemed superfluous, he shut them out upon the staircase, and they groped their way into the street again.

The interview had done so little to remove the mystery in which Tom's new engagement was involved, and had done so much to thicken it, that neither could help smiling at the puzzled looks of the other. They agreed, however, that the introduction of Tom to his new office and office companions could hardly fail to throw a light upon the subject ; and therefore postponed its further consideration until after the fulfilment of the appointment they had made with Mr. Fips.

After looking in at John Westlock's chambers, and devoting a few spare minutes to the Boar's Head, they issued forth again to the place of meeting. The time agreed upon had not quite come ; but Mr. Fips was already at the Temple Gate, and expressed his satisfaction at their punctuality.

He led the way through sundry lanes and courts, into one more quiet and more gloomy than the rest, and, singling out a certain house, ascended a common staircase : taking from his pocket, as he went, a bunch of rusty keys. Stopping before a door upon an upper story, which had nothing but a yellow smear of paint where custom would have placed the tenant's name, he began to beat the dust out of one of these keys, very deliberately, upon the great broad hand-rail of the balustrade.

"You had better have a little plug made," he said, looking round at Tom, after blowing a shrill whistle into the barrel of the key. "It's the only way of preventing them from getting stopped up. You'll find the lock go the better, too, I dare say, for a little oil."

Tom thanked him ; but was too much occupied with his own speculations, and John Westlock's looks, to be very talkative. In the meantime, Mr. Fips opened the door, which yielded to his hand very unwillingly, and with a horribly discordant sound. He took the key out when he had done so and gave it to Tom.

"Aye, aye !" said Mr. Fips. "The dust lies rather thick here."

Truly, it did. Mr. Fips might have gone so far as to say, very thick. It had accumulated everywhere ; lay deep on everything ; and in one part, where a ray of sun shone through a crevice in the shutter and struck upon the opposite wall, it went twirling round and round like a gigantic squirrel-cage.

Dust was the only thing in the place that had any motion about it. When their conductor admitted the light freely, and lifting up the heavy window-sash, let in the summer air, he showed the mouldering furniture, discoloured wainscoting and ceiling, rusty stove, and ashy hearth, in all their inert neglect. Close to the door there stood a candlestick, with an extinguisher upon it, as if the last man who had been there, had paused, after securing a retreat, to take a parting look at the dreariness he left behind, and then had shut out light and life together, and closed the place up like a tomb.

There were two rooms on that floor ; and in the first or outer one a narrow staircase, leading to two more above. These last were fitted up as bed-chambers. Neither in them, nor in the rooms below, was any scarcity of convenient furniture observable, although the fittings were of a by-gone fashion ; but solitude and want of use seemed to have rendered it unfit for any purposes of comfort, and to have given it a grisly, haunted air.

Moveables of every kind lay strewn about, without the least attempt at order, and were intermixed with boxes, hampers, and all sorts of lumber. On all the floors were piles of books, to the amount perhaps of some thousands of volumes : these still in bales : those wrapped in paper, as they had been purchased : others scattered singly or in heaps : not one upon the shelves which lined the walls. To these, Mr. Fips called Tom's attention.

"Before anything else can be done, we must have them put in order, catalogued, and ranged upon the book-shelves, Mr. Pinch. That will do to begin with, I think, sir."

Tom rubbed his hands in the pleasant anticipation of a task so congenial to his taste, and said :

"An occupation full of interest for me, I assure you. It will occupy me, perhaps, until Mr. ——"

"Until Mr.——" repeated Fips; as much as to ask Tom what he was stopping for.

"I forgot that you had not mentioned the gentleman's name," said Tom.

"Oh!" cried Mr. Fips, pulling on his glove, "didn't I? No, by-the-bye, I don't think I did. Ah! I dare say he'll be here soon. You will get on very well together, I have no doubt. I wish you success, I am sure. You won't forget to shut the door? It'll lock of itself if you slam it. Half-past nine, you know. Let us say from half-past nine to four, or half-past four, or thereabouts; one day, perhaps, a little earlier, another day perhaps a little later, according as you feel disposed, and as you arrange your work. Mr. Fips, Austin Friars, of course you'll remember? And you won't forget to slam the door, if you please?"

He said all this in such a comfortable, easy manner, that Tom could only rub his hands, and nod his head, and smile in acquiescence, which he was still doing, when Mr. Fips walked coolly out.

"Why, he's gone," cried Tom.

"And what's more, Tom," said John Westlock, seating himself upon a pile of books, and looking up at his astonished friend, "he is evidently not coming back again: so here you are installed. Under rather singular circumstances, Tom!"

It was such an odd affair throughout, and Tom standing there among the books with his hat in one hand and the key in the other, looked so prodigiously confounded, that his friend could not help laughing heartily. Tom himself was tickled: no less by the hilarity of his friend, than by the recollection of the sudden manner in which he had been brought to a stop, in the very height of his urbane conference with Mr. Fips; so by degrees Tom burst out laughing too; and each making the other laugh more, they fairly roared.

When they had had their laugh out, which did not happen very soon, for, give John an inch in that way, and he was sure to take several ells, being a jovial, good-tempered fellow, they looked about them more closely, groping among the lumber for any stray means of enlightenment that might turn up. But no scrap or shred of information could they find. The books were marked with a variety of owners' names, having, no doubt, been bought at sales, and collected here and there at different times; but whether any one of these names belonged to Tom's employer, and, if so, which of them, they had no means whatever of determining. It occurred to John as a very bright thought, to make inquiry at the steward's office, to whom the chambers belonged, or by whom they were held; but he came back no wiser than he went, the answer being, "Mr. Fips, of Austin Friars."

"After all, Tom, I begin to think it lies no deeper than this. Fips is an eccentric man; has some knowledge of Pecksniff; despises him, of course; has heard or seen enough of you to know that you are the man he wants; and engages you in his own whimsical manner."

"But why in his own whimsical manner?" asked Tom.

"Oh! why does any man entertain his own whimsical taste? Why does Mr. Fips wear shorts and powder, and Mr. Fips's next door neighbour boots and a wig?"

Tom, being in that state of mind in which any explanation is a great relief, adopted this last one (which indeed was quite as feasible as any other) readily, and said he had no doubt of it. Nor was his faith at all shaken by his having said exactly the same thing to each suggestion of his friend's in turn, and being perfectly ready to say it again if he had had any new solution to propose.

As he had not, Tom drew down the window sash, and folded the shutter ; and they left the rooms. He closed the door heavily, as Mr. Fips had desired him ; tried it, found it all fast, and put the key in his pocket.

They made a pretty wide circuit in going back to Islington, as they had time to spare ; and Tom was never tired of looking about him. It was well he had John Westlock for his companion, for most people would have been weary of his perpetual stoppages at shop-windows, and his frequent dashes into the crowded carriage-way at the peril of his life, to get the better view of church steeples, and other public buildings. But John was charmed to see him so much interested, and every time Tom came back with a beaming face from among the wheels of carts and hackney-coaches, wholly unconscious of the personal congratulations addressed to him by the drivers, John seemed to like him better than before.

There was no flour on Ruth's hands when she received them in the triangular parlour, but there were pleasant smiles upon her face, and a crowd of welcomes shining out of every one, and gleaming in her bright eyes. By-the-bye, how bright they were ! Looking into them for but a moment, when you took her hand, you saw in each such a capital miniature of yourself, representing you as such a restless, flashing, eager, brilliant little fellow—

Ah ! if you could only have kept them for your own miniature ! But wicked, roving, restless, too impartial eyes, it was enough for any one to stand before them, and straightway, there he danced and sparkled quite as merrily as you.

The table was already spread for dinner ; and though it was spread with nothing very choice in the way of glass or linen, and with green-handled knives, and very mountebanks of two-pronged forks, which seemed to be trying how far asunder they could possibly stretch their legs, without converting themselves into double the number of iron toothpicks ; it wanted neither damask, silver, gold, nor china : no, nor any other garniture at all. There it was : and, being there, nothing else would have done as well.

The success of that initiative dish : that first experiment of hers in cookery : was so entire, so unalloyed and perfect, that John Westlock and Tom agreed she must have been studying the art in secret for a long time past ; and urged her to make a full confession of the fact. They were exceedingly merry over this jest, and many smart things were said concerning it ; but John was not as fair in his behaviour as might have been expected, for, after luring Tom Pinch on for a long time, he suddenly went over to the enemy, and swore everything his sister said. However, as Tom observed the same night before going to bed, it was only in joke, and John had always been famous for being polite to ladies,

case his strange employer should appear and ask what had become of it), he led a happy, quiet, studious kind of life, after his own heart.

But though the books were never so interesting, and never so full of novelty to Tom, they could not so enchain him, in those mysterious chambers, as to render him unconscious for a moment of the lightest sound. Any footstep on the flags without, set him listening attentively, and when it turned into that house, and came up, up, up, the stairs, he always thought with a beating heart, "Now I am coming face to face with him, at last!" But no footstep ever passed the floor immediately below: except his own.

This mystery and loneliness engendered fancies in Tom's mind, the folly of which his common sense could readily discover, but which his common sense was quite unable to keep away, notwithstanding; that quality being with most of us, in such a case, like the old French Police—quick at detection, but very weak as a preventive power. Misgivings, undefined, absurd, inexplicable, that there was some one hiding in the inner room; walking softly overhead, peeping in through the door-chink; doing something stealthy, anywhere where he was not; came over him a hundred times a day: making it pleasant to throw up the sash, and hold communication even with the sparrows who had built in the roof and water-spout, and were twittering about the windows all day long.

He sat with the outer door wide open at all times, that he might hear the footsteps as they entered, and turned off into the chambers on the lower floors. He formed odd prepossessions too, regarding strangers in the streets; and would say within himself of such or such a man, who struck him as having anything uncommon in his dress or aspect, "I should n't wonder now if that were he!" But it never was. And though he actually turned back and followed more than one of these suspected individuals, in a singular belief that they were going to the place he was then upon his way from, he never got any other satisfaction by it, than the satisfaction of knowing it was not the case.

Mr. Fips, of Austin Friars, rather deepened than illumined the obscurity of his position; for on the first occasion of Tom's waiting on him to receive his weekly pay, he said:

"Oh! by-the-bye, Mr. Pinch, you need n't mention it, if you please!"

Tom thought he was going to tell him a secret; so he said that he would n't on any account, and that Mr. Fips might entirely depend upon him. But as Mr. Fips said "Very good," in reply, and nothing more, Tom prompted him:

"Not on any account," repeated Tom.

Mr. Fips repeated "Very good."

"You were going to say"—Tom hinted.

"Oh dear no!" cried Fips. "Not at all." However, seeing Tom confused, he added, "I mean that you need n't mention any particulars about your place of employment, to people generally. You'll find it better not."

"I have not had the pleasure of seeing my employer yet, sir," observed Tom, putting his week's salary in his pocket.

"Have n't you?" said Fips. "No, I don't suppose you have though."

"I should like to thank him, and to know that what I have done so far, is done to his satisfaction," faltered Tom.

"Quite right," said Mr. Fips, with a yawn. "Highly creditable. Very proper."

Tom hastily resolved to try him on another tack.

"I shall soon have finished with the books," he said. "I hope that will not terminate my engagement, sir, or render me useless."

"Oh dear no!" retorted Fips. "Plenty to do : plen-ty to do ! Be careful how you go. It's rather dark."

This was the very utmost extent of information Tom could ever get out of *him*. So it was dark enough in all conscience ; and if Mr. Fips expressed himself with a double meaning, he had good reason for doing so.

But now a circumstance occurred, which helped to divert Tom's thoughts from even this mystery, and to divide them between it and a new channel, which was a very Nile in itself.

The way it came about was this. Having always been an early riser, and having now no Organ to engage him in sweet converse every morning, it was his habit to take a long walk before going to the Temple ; and naturally inclining, as a stranger, towards those parts of the town which were conspicuous for the life and animation pervading them, he became a great frequenter of the market-places, bridges, quays, and especially the steam-boat wharves ; for it was very lively and fresh to see the people hurrying away upon their many schemes of business or pleasure ; and it made Tom glad to think that there was that much change and freedom in the monotonous routine of city lives.

In most of these morning excursions Ruth accompanied him. As their landlord was always up and away at his business (whatever that might be, no one seemed to know) at a very early hour, the habits of the people of the house in which they lodged corresponded with their own. Thus, they had often finished their breakfast, and were out in the summer-air, by seven o'clock. After a two hours' stroll they parted at some convenient point : Tom going to the Temple, and his sister returning home, as methodically as you please.

Many and many a pleasant stroll they had in Covent-Garden Market : snuffing up the perfume of the fruits and flowers, wondering at the magnificence of the pine-apples and melons ; catching glimpses down side-avenues, of rows and rows of old women, seated on inverted baskets shelling peas ; looking unutterable things at the fat bundles of asparagus with which the dainty shops were fortified as with a breastwork ; and, at the herbalists' doors, gratefully inhaling scents as of veal-stuffing yet uncooked, dreamily mixed up with capsicums, brown-paper, seeds : even with hints of lusty snails and fine young curly leeches. Many and many a pleasant stroll they had among the poultry markets, where ducks and fowls, with necks unnaturally long, lay stretched out in pairs, ready for cooking ; where there were speckled eggs in mossy baskets ; white country sausages beyond impeachment by surviving cat or dog, or horse or donkey ; new cheeses to any wild extent ; live birds in coops and cages, looking much too big to be natural, in consequence of those receptacles being much too little ; rabbits, alive and dead, innumerable. Many a pleasant stroll they had among the cool, refreshing, silvery fish-stalls, with a kind of moonlight effect about their stock in trade, excepting always for the ruddy lobsters. Many a pleasant stroll among the waggon-loads of fragrant hay, beneath which dogs and tired waggons lay

fast asleep, oblivious of the pieman and the public-house. But never half so good a stroll, as down among the steam-boats on a bright morning.

There they lay, alongside of each other ; hard and fast for ever, to all appearance, but designing to get out somehow, and quite confident of doing it ; and in that faith shoals of passengers, and heaps of luggage, were proceeding hurriedly on board. Little steamboats dashed up and down the stream incessantly. Tiers upon tiers of vessels, scores of masts, labyrinths of tackle, idle sails, splashing oars, gliding row-boats, lumbering barges ; sunken piles, with ugly lodgings for the water-rat within their mud-discoloured nooks ; church steeples, warehouses, house-roofs, arches, bridges, men and women, children, casks, cranes, boxes, horses, coaches, idlers, and hard-labourers : there they were, all jumbled up together, any summer morning, far beyond Tom's power of separation.

In the midst of all this turmoil, there was an incessant roar from every packet's funnel, which quite expressed and carried out the uppermost emotion of the scene. They all appeared to be perspiring and bothering themselves, exactly as their passengers did ; they never left off fretting and chafing, in their own hoarse manner, once ; but were always panting out, without any stops, "Come along do make haste I'm very nervous come along oh good gracious we shall never get there how late you are do make haste I'm off directly come along !" Even when they had left off, and had got safely out into the current, on the smallest provocation they began again : for the bravest packet of them all, being stopped by some entanglement in the river, would immediately begin to fume and pant afresh, "Oh here's a stoppage what's the matter do go on there I'm in a hurry it's done on purpose did you ever oh my goodness *do go on there!*" and so, in a state of mind bordering on distraction, would be last seen drifting slowly through the mist into the summer light beyond, that made it red.

Tom's ship, however ; or, at least, the packet-boat in which Tom and his sister took the greatest interest on one particular occasion ; was not off yet, by any means ; but was at the height of its disorder. The press of passengers was very great ; another steam-boat lay on each side of her ; the gangways were choked up ; distracted women, obviously bound for Gravesend, but turning a deaf ear to all representations that this particular vessel was about to sail for Antwerp, persisted in secreting baskets of refreshments behind bulk-heads and water-casks, and under seats ; and very great confusion prevailed.

It was so amusing, that Tom, with Ruth upon his arm, stood looking down from the wharf, as nearly regardless as it was in the nature of flesh and blood to be, of an elderly lady behind him, who had brought a large umbrella with her, and didn't know what to do with it. This tremendous instrument had a hooked handle ; and its vicinity was first made known to him by a painful pressure on the windpipe, consequent upon its having caught him round the throat. Soon after disengaging himself with perfect good humour, he had a sensation of the ferrule in his back ; immediately afterwards, of the hook entangling his ankles ; then of the umbrella generally, wandering about his hat, and flapping at it like a great bird ; and, lastly, of a poke or thrust below the ribs, which gave him such exceeding anguish, that he could not refrain from turning round, to offer a mild remonstrance.

Upon his turning round, he found the owner of the umbrella struggling, on tiptoe, with a countenance expressive of violent animosity, to look down upon the steamboats; from which he inferred that she had attacked him: standing in the front row: by design, and as her natural enemy.

"What a very ill-natured person you must be!" said Tom.

The lady cried out fiercely, "Where's the pelisse!"—meaning the constabulary—and went on to say, shaking the handle of the umbrella at Tom, that but for them fellers never being in the way when they was wanted, she'd have given him in charge, she would.

"If they greased their whiskers less, and minded the duties which they're paid so heavy for, a little more," she observed, "no one needn't be drove mad by scrouding so!"

She had been grievously knocked about, no doubt, for her bonnet was bent into the shape of a cocked hat. Being a fat little woman, too, she was in a state of great exhaustion and intense heat. Instead of pursuing the altercation, therefore, Tom civilly inquired what boat she wanted to go on board of.

"I suppose," returned the lady, "as nobody but yourself can want to look at a steam package, without wanting to go a boarding of it, can they! Booby!"

"Which one do you want to look at then?" said Tom. "We'll make room for you if we can. Don't be so ill-tempered."

"No blessed creetur as ever I was with in trying times," returned the lady, somewhat softened, "and they're a many in their numbers, ever brought it as a charge again myself that I was anythin but mild and equal in my spirits. Never mind a contradicting of me, if you seems to feel it does you good, ma'am, I often says, for well you know that Sairey may be trusted not to give it back again. But I will not denige that I am worried and vexed this day, and with good reagon, Lord forbid!"

By this time, Mrs. Gamp (for it was no other than that experienced practitioner) had, with Tom's assistance, squeezed and worked herself into a small corner between Ruth and the rail; where, after breathing very hard for some little time, and performing a short series of dangerous evolutions with the umbrella, she managed to establish herself pretty comfortably.

"And which of all them smoking monsters is the Ankworks boat, I wonder, Goodness me!" cried Mrs. Gamp.

"What boat did you want?" asked Ruth.

"The Ankworks package," Mrs. Gamp replied. "I will not deceive you, my sweet. Why should I?"

"That is the Antwerp packet in the middle," said Ruth.

"And I wish it was in Jonadge's belly, I do," cried Mrs. Gamp; appearing to confound the prophet with the whale in this miraculous aspiration.

Ruth said nothing in reply; but as Mrs. Gamp, laying her chin against the cool iron of the rail, continued to look intently at the Antwerp boat, and every now and then to give a little groan, she inquired whether any child of hers was going abroad that morning? Or perhaps her husband, she said kindly.

"Which shows," said Mrs. Gamp, casting up her eyes, "what a little way you've travelled into this wale of life, my dear young creetur. As a good friend of mine has frequent made remark to me, which her

name, my love, is Harris, Mrs. Harris through the square and up the steps a turnin round by the tobacker shop, 'Oh Sairey, Sairey, little do we know wot lays afore us !' 'Mrs. Harris ma'am,' I says, 'not much, it's true, but more than you suppage. Our calcitations ma'am,' I says, 'respectin wot the number of a family will be, comes most times within one, and oftener than you would suppage, exact.' 'Sairey,' says Mrs. Harris, in a awful way, 'Tell me wot is my individle number.' 'No, Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'ex-cuse me, if you please. My own,' I says, 'has fallen out of three-pair backs, and had damp doorsteps settled on their lungs, and one was turned up smilin in a bedstead, unbeknown. Therefore, ma'am,' I says, 'seek not to proticipate, but take 'em as they come and as they go.' Mine," said Mrs. Gamp, "mine is all gone, my dear young chick. And as to husbands, there's a wooden leg gone likeways home to its account, which in its constancy of walkin into wine vaults, and never comin out again 'till fetched by force, was quite as weak as flesh, if not weaker."

When she had delivered this oration, Mrs. Gamp leaned her chin upon the cool iron again; and looking intently at the Antwerp packet, shook her head and groaned.

"I would n't" said Mrs. Gamp, "I would n't be a man and have such a think upon my mind!—but nobody as owned the name of man, could do it!"

Tom and his sister glanced at each other; and Ruth, after a moment's hesitation, asked Mrs. Gamp what troubled her so much.

"My dear," returned that lady, dropping her voice, "you are single, a'n't you?"

Ruth laughed, blushed, and said "Yes."

"Worse luck," proceeded Mrs. Gamp, "for all parties! But others is married, and in the marriage state; and there is a dear young creetur a comin' down this mornin' to that very package, which is no more fit to trust herself to sea, than nothin' is!"

She paused here, to look all over the deck of the packet in question, and on the steps leading down to it, and on the gangways. Seeming to have thus assured herself that the object of her commiseration had not yet arrived, she raised her eyes gradually up to the top of the escape-pipe, and indignantly apostrophised the vessel:

"Oh drat you!" said Mrs. Gamp, shaking her umbrella at it, "you're a nice spluttering noisy monster for a delicate young creetur to go and be a passinger by; a'n't you!" You never do no harm in that way, do you? With your hammering, and roaring, and hissing, and lamp-iling, you brute! Them Confusion steamers," said Mrs. Gamp, shaking her umbrella again, "has done more to throw us out of our reg'lar work and bring ewents on at times when nobody counted on 'em (especially them screeching railroad ones), than all the other frights that ever was took. I have heerd of one young man, a guard upon a railway, only three year opened—well does Mrs. Harris know him, which indeed he is her own relation by her sister's marriage with a master sawyer—as is godfather at this present time to six-and-twenty blessed little strangers, equally unexpected, and all on 'um named after the Ingeins as was the cause. Ugh!" said Mrs. Gamp, resuming her apostrophe, "one might easy know you was a man's invention, from your disregardlessness of the weakness of our natures, so one might, you brute!"

It would not have been unnatural to suppose, from the first part of Mrs. Gamp's lamentations, that she was connected with the stage coaching or post-horsing trade. She had no means of judging of the effect of her concluding remarks upon her young companion ; for she interrupted herself at this point, and exclaimed :

"There she identically goes ! Poor sweet young creetur, there she goes, like a lamb to the sacrifice ! If there's any illness when that wessel gets to sea," said Mrs. Gamp, prophetically, "it's murder, and I'm the witness for the persecution."

She was so very earnest on the subject, that Tom's sister (being as kind as Tom himself), could not help saying something to her in reply.

"Pray which is the lady," she inquired, "in whom you are so much interested ?"

"There !" groaned Mrs. Gamp. "There she goes ! A crossin' the little wooden bridge at this minute. She's a slippin' on a bit of orange-peel !" tightly clutching her umbrella. "What a turn it give me !"

"Do you mean the lady who is with that man wrapped up from head to foot in a large cloak, so that his face is almost hidden ?"

"Well he may hide it !" Mrs. Gamp replied. "He's good call to be ashamed of himself. Did you see him a jerking of her wrist, then ?"

"He seems to be hasty with her, indeed."

"Now he's a taking of her down into the close cabin !" said Mrs. Gamp, impatiently. "What's the man about ! The deuce is in him I think. Why can't he leave her in the open air ?"

He did not, whatever his reason was, but led her quickly down and disappeared himself, without loosening his cloak, or pausing on the crowded deck one moment longer than was necessary to clear their way to that part of the vessel.

Tom had not heard this little dialogue ; for his attention had been engaged in an unexpected manner. A hand upon his sleeve had caused him to look round just when Mrs. Gamp concluded her apostrophe to the steam-engine ; and on his right arm, Ruth being on his left, he found their landlord ; to his great surprise.

He was not so much surprised at the man's being there, as at his having got close to him so quietly and swiftly ; for another person had been at his elbow one instant before ; and he had not in the meantime been conscious of any change or pressure in the knot of people among whom he stood. He and Ruth had frequently remarked how noiselessly this landlord of their's came into and went out of his own house ; but Tom was not the less amazed to see him at his elbow now.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pinch," he said in his ear. "I am rather infirm, and out of breath, and my eyes are not very good. I am not as young as I was, sir. You don't see a gentleman in a large cloak down yonder, with a lady on his arm ; a lady in a veil and a black shawl ; do you ?"

If he did not, it was curious that in speaking he should have singled out from all the crowd the very people whom he described : and should have glanced hastily from them to Tom, as if he were burning to direct his wandering eyes.

"A gentleman in a large cloak !" said Tom, "and a lady in a black shawl ! Let me see !"

"Yes, yes !" replied the other, with keen impatience. "A gentleman

muffled up from head to foot—strangely muffled up for such a morning as this—like an invalid, with his hand to his face at this minute, perhaps. No, no, no! not there,” he added, following Tom’s gaze; “the other way; in that direction; down yonder.” Again he indicated, but this time in his hurry, with his outstretched finger, the very spot on which the progress of these persons was checked at that moment.

“There are so many people, and so much motion, and so many objects,” said Tom, “that I find it difficult to—no, I really don’t see a gentleman in a large cloak, and a lady in a black shawl. There’s a lady in a red shawl over there!”

“No, no, no!” cried his landlord, pointing eagerly again, “not there. The other way: the other way. Look at the cabin steps. To the left. They must be near the cabin steps. Do you see the cabin steps? There’s the bell ringing already! Do you see the steps?”

“Stay!” said Tom, “you’re right. Look! there they go now. Is that the gentleman you mean? Descending at this minute; with the folds of a great cloak trailing down after him?”

“The very man!” returned the other, not looking at what Tom pointed out, however, but at Tom’s own face. “Will you do me a kindness, sir, a great kindness? Will you put that letter in his hand? Only give him that? He expects it. I am charged to do it by my employers, but I am late in finding him, and, not being as young as I have been, should never be able to make my way on board and off the deck again in time. Will you pardon my boldness, and do me that great kindness?”

His hands shook, and his face bespoke the utmost interest and agitation, as he pressed the letter upon Tom, and pointed to its destination, like the Tempter in some grim old carving.

To hesitate in the performance of a good-natured or compassionate office, was not in Tom’s way. He took the letter; whispered Ruth to wait till he returned, which would be immediately; and ran down the steps with all the expedition he could make. There were so many people going down, so many others coming up, such heavy goods in course of transit to and fro, such a ringing of bells, blowing-off of steam, and shouting of men’s voices, that he had much ado to force his way, or keep in mind to which boat he was going. But he reached the right one with good speed, and going down the cabin-stairs immediately, descried the object of his search standing at the further end of the saloon, with his back towards him, reading some notice which was hung against the wall. As Tom advanced to give him the letter, he started, hearing footsteps, and turned round.

What was Tom’s astonishment to find in him the man with whom he had had the conflict in the field, poor Mercy’s husband. Jonas!

Tom understood him to say, what the devil did he want; but it was not easy to make out what he said; he spoke so indistinctly.

“I want nothing with you for myself,” said Tom, “I was asked a moment since to give you this letter. You were pointed out to me, but I didn’t know you in your strange dress. Take it!”

He did so, opened it, and read the writing on the inside. The contents were evidently very brief; not more perhaps than one line; but they struck upon him like a stone from a sling. He reeled back as he read.

His emotion was so different from any Tom had ever seen before, that he stopped involuntarily. Momentary as his state of indecision was, the bell ceased while he stood there ; and a hoarse voice calling down the steps, inquired if there was any one to go ashore.

"Yes," cried Jonas, "I—I am coming. Give me time. Where's that woman ! Come back ; come back here."

He threw open another door as he spoke, and dragged, rather than led, her forth. She was pale and frightened, and amazed to see her old acquaintance ; but had no time to speak, for they were making a great stir above ; and Jonas drew her rapidly towards the deck.

"Where are we going ? What is the matter ?"

"We are going back," said Jonas, wildly. "I've changed my mind. I can't go. Don't question me, or I shall be the death of you, or some one else. Stop there ! Stop ! We're for the shore. Do you hear ? We're for the shore !"

He turned, even in the madness of his hurry, and scowling darkly back at Tom, shook his clenched hand at him. There are not many human faces capable of the expression with which he accompanied that gesture.

He dragged her up, and Tom followed them. Across the deck, over the side, along the crazy plank, and up the steps, he dragged her fiercely ; not bestowing any look on her, but gazing upwards all the while among the faces on the wharf. Suddenly he turned again, and said to Tom with a tremendous oath :

"Where is he ?"

Before Tom, in his indignation and amazement, could return an answer to a question he so little understood, a gentleman approached Tom behind, and saluted Jonas Chuzzlewit by name. He was a gentleman of foreign appearance, with a black moustache and whiskers ; and addressed him with a polite composure, strangely different from his own distracted and desperate manner.

"Chuzzlewit, my good fellow !" said the gentleman, raising his hat in compliment to Mrs. Chuzzlewit, "I ask your pardon twenty thousand times. I am most unwilling to interfere between you and a domestic trip of this nature (always so very charming and refreshing, I know, although I have not the happiness to be a domestic man myself, which is the great infelicity of my existence) : but the bee-hive, my dear friend, the bee-hive—will you introduce me ?"

"This is Mr. Montague," said Jonas, whom the words appeared to choke.

"The most unhappy and most penitent of men, Mrs. Chuzzlewit," pursued that gentleman, "for having been the means of spoiling this excursion ; but as I tell my friend, the bee-hive ; the bee-hive. You projected a short little continental trip, my dear friend, of course ?"

Jonas maintained a dogged silence.

"May I die !" cried Montague, "but I am shocked. Upon my soul I am shocked. But that confounded bee-hive of ours in the city must be paramount to every other consideration, when there is honey to be made ; and that is my best excuse. Here is a very singular old female dropping curtsies on my right," said Montague, breaking off in his discourse, and looking at Mrs. Gamp, "who is not a friend of mine. Does anybody know her ?"

"Ah ! Well they knows me, bless their precious hearts !" said

Mrs. Gamp ; "not forgettin' your own merry one, sir, and long may it be so ! Wishin' as every one," (she delivered this in the form of a toast or sentiment) "was as merry, and as handsome-looking, as a little bird has whispered me a certain gent is, which I will not name for fear I give offence where none is due ! My precious lady," here she stopped short in her merriment, for she had until now affected to be vastly entertained, "you're too pale by half !"

"You are here too, are you ?" muttered Jonas. "Ecod, there are enough of you."

"I hope, sir," returned Mrs. Gamp, dropping an indignant curtsy, "as no bones is broke by me and Mrs. Harris walkin' down upon a public wharf. Which was the very words she says to me (although they was the last I ever had to speak) was these : 'Sairey,' she says, 'is it a public wharf ?' 'Mrs. Harris,' I makes answer, 'can you doubt it ? You have know'd me, now, ma'am, eight and thirty year ; and did you ever know me go, or wish to go, where I was not made welcome, say the words.' 'No, Sairey,' Mrs. Harris says, 'contrairy quite.' And well she knows it, too. I am but a poor woman, but I've been sought arter, sir, though you may not think it. I've been knocked up at all hours of the night, and warned out by a many landlords, in consequence of being mistook for Fire. I goes out working for my bread, 'tis true, but I maintains my indepenency, with your kind leave, and which I will till death. I has my feelins as a woman, sir, and I have been a mother likeways ; but touch a pipkin as belongs to me, or make the least remarks on what I eats or drinks, and though you was the favouritest young, for'ard, hussy of a servant-gal as ever come into a house, either you leaves the place, or me. My earnins is not great, sir, but I will not be impoged upon. Bless the babe, and save the mother, is my motter, sir ; but I makes so free as add to that, Don't try no impogician with the Nuss, for she will not abear it !"

Mrs. Gamp concluded by drawing her shawl tightly over herself with both hands, and, as usual, referring to Mrs. Harris for full corroboration of these particulars. She had that peculiar trembling of the head, which, in ladies of her excitable nature, may be taken as a sure indication of their breaking out again very shortly ; when Jonas made a timely interposition.

"As you *are* here," he said, "you had better see to her, and take her home. I am otherwise engaged." He said nothing more ; but looked at Montague, as if to give him notice that he was ready to attend him.

"I am sorry to take you away," said Montague.

Jonas gave him a sinister look, which long lived in Tom's memory, and which he often recalled afterwards.

"I am, upon my life," said Montague. "Why did you make it necessary ?"

With the same dark glance as before, Jonas replied, after a moment's silence,

"The necessity is none of my making. You have brought it about yourself."

He said nothing more. He said even this as if he were bound, and in the other's power, but had a sullen and suppressed devil within him, which he could not quite resist. His very gait, as they walked away together, was like that of a fettered man ; but, striving to work out at

his clenched hands, knitted brows, and fast-set lips, was the same imprisoned devil still.

They got into a handsome cabriolet, which was waiting for them, and drove away.

The whole of this extraordinary scene had passed so rapidly, and the tumult which prevailed around was so unconscious of any impression from it, that although Tom had been one of the chief actors, it was like a dream. No one had noticed him after they had left the packet. He had stood behind Jonas, and so near him, that he could not help hearing all that passed. He had stood there, with his sister on his arm, expecting and hoping to have an opportunity of explaining his strange share in this yet stranger business. But Jonas had not raised his eyes from the ground; no one else had even looked towards him; and before he could resolve on any course of action, they were all gone.

He gazed round for his landlord. But he had done that more than once already; and no such man was to be seen. He was still pursuing this search with his eyes, when he saw a hand beckoning to him from a hackney-coach; and hurrying towards it, found it was Merry's. She addressed him hurriedly, but bent out of the window, that she might not be overheard by her companion, Mrs. Gamp.

"What is it!" she said, "Good Heaven, what is it? Why did he tell me last night to prepare for a long journey, and why have you brought us back like criminals? Dear Mr. Pinch!" she clasped her hands, distractedly, "be merciful to us. Whatever this dreadful secret is, be merciful, and God will bless you!"

"If any power of mercy lay with me," cried Tom, "trust me, you should n't ask in vain. But I am far more ignorant and weak than you."

She withdrew into the coach again, and he saw the hand waving towards him for a moment; but whether in reproachfulness or incredulity, or misery, or grief, or sad adieu, or what else, he could not, being so hurried, understand. *She* was gone now; and Ruth and he were left to walk away, and wonder.

Had Mr. Nadgett appointed the man who never came, to meet him upon London Bridge, that morning? He was certainly looking over the parapet, and down upon the steamboat-wharf at that moment. It could not have been for pleasure; he never took pleasure. No. He must have had some business there.

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. JONAS AND HIS FRIEND, ARRIVING AT A PLEASANT UNDERSTANDING,
SET FORTH UPON AN ENTERPRISE.

THE office of the Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Insurance Company being near at hand; and Mr. Montague driving Jonas straight there; they had very little way to go. But the journey might have been one of several hours' duration, without provoking a remark from either: for it was clear that Jonas did not mean to break the silence which prevailed between them, and that it was not, as yet, his dear friend's cue to tempt him into conversation.

He had thrown aside his cloak, as having now no motive for concealment, and with that garment huddled on his knees, sat as far removed from his companion as the limited space in such a carriage would allow. There was a striking difference in his manner, compared with what it had been, within a few minutes, when Tom encountered him so unexpectedly on board the packet, or when the ugly change had fallen on him in Mr. Montague's dressing-room. He had the aspect of a man found out, and held at bay; of being baffled, hunted, and beset; but there was now a dawning and increasing purpose in his face, which changed it very much. It was gloomy, distrustful, lowering; pale with anger, and defeat; it still was humbled, abject, cowardly, and mean; but let the conflict go on as it would, there was one strong purpose wrestling with every emotion of his mind, and casting the whole series down as they arose.

Not prepossessing in appearance, at the best of times, it may be readily supposed that he was not so now. He had left deep marks of his front teeth in his nether lip; and those tokens of the agitation he had lately undergone, improved his looks as little as the heavy corrugations in his forehead. But he was self-possessed now; unnaturally self-possessed, indeed, as men quite otherwise than brave are known to be in desperate extremities; and when the carriage stopped, he waited for no invitation, but leaped hardily out, and went up stairs.

The chairman followed him; and closing the board-room door as soon as they had entered, threw himself upon a sofa. Jonas stood before the window, looking down into the street; and leaned against the sash; resting his head upon his arms.

"This is not handsome, Chuzzlewit!" said Montague, at length. "Not handsome, upon my soul!"

"What would you have me do?" he answered, looking round abruptly; "what do you expect?"

"Confidence, my good fellow. Some confidence!" said Montague, in an injured tone.

"Ecod! You show great confidence in me," retorted Jonas. "Don't you?"

"Do I not?" said his companion, raising his head, and looking at him, but he had turned again. "Do I not? Have I not confided to you the easy schemes I have formed for our advantage; *our* advantage, mind; not mine alone; and what is my return? Attempted flight!"

"How do you know that? Who said I meant to fly?"

"Who said! Come, come. A foreign boat, my friend, an early hour, a figure wrapped up for disguise! Who said! If you didn't mean to jilt me, why were you there? If you didn't mean to jilt me, why did you come back?"

"I came back," said Jonas, "to avoid disturbance."

"You were wise," rejoined his friend.

Jonas stood quite silent; still looking down into the street, and resting his head upon his arms.

"Now, Chuzzlewit," said Montague, "notwithstanding what has passed, I will be plain with you. Are you attending to me, there? I only see your back."

"I hear you. Go on!"

"I say that notwithstanding what has passed, I will be plain with you."

"You said that before. And I have told you once, I heard you say it. Go on."

"You are a little chafed, but I can make allowances for that; and am, fortunately, myself in the very best of tempers. Now, let us see how circumstances stand. A day or two ago, I mentioned to you, my dear fellow, that I thought I had discovered——"

"Will you hold your tongue?" said Jonas, looking fiercely round, and glancing at the door.

"Well, well!" said Montague. "Judicious! Quite correct! My discoveries being published, would be like many other men's discoveries in this honest world; of no further use to me. You see, Chuzzlewit, how ingenuous and frank I am in showing you the weakness of my own position! To return. I make, or think I make, a certain discovery, which I take an early opportunity of mentioning in your ear, in that spirit of confidence which I really hoped did prevail between us, and was reciprocated by you. Perhaps there is something in it; perhaps there is nothing. I have my knowledge and opinion on the subject. You have yours. We will not discuss the question. But, my good fellow, you have been weak; what I wish to point out to you is, that you have been weak. I may desire to turn this little incident to my account (indeed, I do. I'll not deny it) but my account does not lie in probing it, or using it against you."

"What do you call using it against me?" asked Jonas, who had not yet changed his attitude.

"Oh!" said Montague, with a laugh. "We'll not enter into that."

"Using it, to make a beggar of me. Is that the use you mean?"

"No."

"Ecod," muttered Jonas, bitterly. "That's the use in which your account *does* lie. You speak the truth there."

"I wish you to venture (it's a very safe venture) a little more with us, certainly, and to keep quiet," said Montague. You promised me you would; and you must. I say it plainly, Chuzzlewit, you *MUST*. Reason the matter. If you don't, my secret is worthless to me; and being so, it may as well become the public property as mine: better, for I shall gain some credit, bringing it to light. I want you, besides, to act as a decoy in a case I have already told you of. You don't mind that, I know. You care nothing for the man (you care nothing for any man; you are too sharp; so am I, I hope); and could bear any loss of his with pious fortitude. Ha, ha, ha! You have tried to escape from the first consequence. You cannot escape it, I assure you. I have shown you that to-day. Now, I am not a moral man, you know. I am not the least in the world affected by anything you may have done; by any little indiscretion you may have committed; but I wish to profit by it, if I can; and to a man of your intelligence I make that free confession. I am not at all singular in that infirmity. Everybody profits by the indiscretion of his neighbour; and the people in the best repute, the most. Why do you give me this trouble? It must come to a friendly agreement, or an unfriendly crash. It must. If the former, you are very little

hurt. If the latter—well! you know best what is likely to happen then.”

Jonas left the window, and walked up close to him. He did not look him in the face; it was not his habit to do that; but he kept his eyes towards him—on his breast, or thereabouts—and was at great pains to speak slowly and distinctly, in reply. Just as a man in a state of conscious drunkenness might be.

“Lying is of no use, now,” he said. “I *did* think of getting away this morning, and making better terms with you from a distance.”

“To be sure! To be sure!” replied Montague. “Nothing more natural. I foresaw that, and provided against it. But I am afraid I am interrupting you.”

“How the devil,” pursued Jonas, with a still greater effort, “you made choice of your messenger, and where you found him, I’ll not ask you. I owed him one good turn before to-day. If you are so careless of men in general, as you said you were just now, you are quite indifferent to what becomes of such a crop-tailed cur as that, and will leave me to settle my account with him in my own manner.”

If he had raised his eyes to his companion’s face, he would have seen that Montague was evidently unable to comprehend his meaning. But continuing to stand before him, with his furtive gaze directed as before, and pausing here, only to moisten his dry lips with his tongue, the fact was lost upon him. It might have struck a close observer that this fixed and steady glance of Jonas’s was a part of the alteration which had taken place in his demeanour. He kept it rivetted on one spot, with which his thoughts had manifestly nothing to do; like as a juggler, walking on a cord or wire to any dangerous end, holds some object in his sight to steady him, and never wanders from it, lest he trip.

Montague was quick in his rejoinder, though he made it at a venture. There was no difference of opinion between him and his friend on *that* point. Not the least.

“Your great discovery,” Jonas proceeded, with a savage sneer that got the better of him for the moment, “may be true, and may be false. Whichever it is, I dare say I’m no worse than other men.”

“Not a bit,” said Tigg. “Not a bit. We’re all alike—or nearly so.”

“I want to know this,” Jonas went on to say; “is it your own? You’ll not wonder at my asking the question.”

“My own!” repeated Montague.

“Aye!” returned the other, gruffly. “Is it known to anybody else? Come! Don’t waver about that.”

“No!” said Montague, without the smallest hesitation. “What would it be worth, do you think, unless I had the keeping of it?”

Now, for the first time, Jonas looked at him. After a pause, he put out his hand, and said, with a laugh:

“Come! make things easy to me, and I’m yours. I don’t know that I may not be better off here, after all, than if I had gone away this morning. But here I am, and here I’ll stay now. Take your oath!”

He cleared his throat, for he was speaking hoarsely, and said in a lighter tone:

“Shall I go to Pecksniff? When? Say when!”

"Immediately!" cried Montague. "He cannot be enticed too soon."

"Ecod!" cried Jonas, with a wild laugh. "There's some fun in catching that old hypocrite. I hate him. Shall I go to-night?"

"Aye! This," said Montague, ecstatically, "is like business! We understand each other now! To-night, my good fellow, by all means."

"Come with me!" cried Jonas. "We must make a dash: go down in state, and carry documents, for he's a deep one to deal with, and must be drawn on with an artful hand, or he'll not follow. I know him. As I can't take your lodgings or your dinners down, I must take you. Will you come to-night?"

His friend appeared to hesitate; and neither to have anticipated this proposal, nor to relish it very much.

"We can concert our plans upon the road," said Jonas. "We must not go direct to him, but cross over from some other place, and turn out of our way to see him. I may not want to introduce you, but I must have you on the spot. I know the man, I tell you."

"But, what if the man knows me?" said Montague, shrugging his shoulders.

"He know!" cried Jonas, "Don't you run that risk with fifty men a day! Would your father know you? Did I know you? Ecod, you were another figure when I saw you first. Ha, ha ha! I see the rents and patches now! No false hair then, no black dye! You were another sort of joker in those days, you were! You even spoke different, then. You've acted the gentleman so seriously since, that you've taken in yourself. If he should know you, what does it matter? Such a change is a proof of your success." You know that, or you would not have made yourself known to me. Will you come?"

"My good fellow," said Montague, still hesitating, "I can trust you alone."

"Trust me! Ecod, you may trust me now far enough. I'll try to go away no more—no more!" He stopped, and added in a more sober tone, "I can't get on without you. Will you come?"

"I will," said Montague, "if that's your opinion." And they shook hands upon it.

The boisterous manner which Jonas had exhibited during the latter part of this conversation, and which had gone on rapidly increasing with almost every word he had spoken; from the time when he looked his honourable friend in the face until now; did not now subside, but, remaining at its height, abided by him. Most unusual with him at any period; most inconsistent with his temper and constitution; especially unnatural it would appear in one so darkly circumstanced; it abided by him. It was not like the effect of wine, or any ardent drink, for he was perfectly coherent. It even made him proof against the usual influence of such means of excitement; for, although he drank deeply several times that day, with no reserve or caution, he remained exactly the same man, and his spirits neither rose nor fell in the least observable degree.

Deciding, after some discussion, to travel at night, in order that the day's business might not be broken in upon, they took counsel together in reference to the means. Mr. Montague being of opinion that four horses were advisable, at all events for the first stage, as throwing a

great deal of dust into people's eyes, in more senses than one, a travelling chariot and four lay under orders for nine o'clock. Jonas did not go home: observing, that his being obliged to leave town on business in so great a hurry, would be a good excuse for having turned back so unexpectedly in the morning. So he wrote a note for his portmanteau, and sent it by a messenger, who duly brought his luggage back, with a short note from that other piece of luggage, his wife, expressive of her wish to be allowed to come and see him for a moment. To this request he sent for answer, "she had better;" and one such threatening affirmative being sufficient, in defiance of the English grammar, to express a negative, she kept away.

Mr. Montague, being much engaged in the course of the day, Jonas bestowed his spirits chiefly on the doctor, with whom he lunched in the medical officer's own room. On his way thither, encountering Mr. Nadgett in the outer office, he bantered that stealthy gentleman on always appearing anxious to avoid him, and inquired if he were afraid of him. Mr. Nadgett shyly answered, "No, but he believed it must be his way, as he had been charged with much the same kind of thing before."

Mr. Montague was listening to: or, to speak with greater elegance, he overheard this dialogue. As soon as Jonas was gone, he beckoned Nadgett to him with the feather of his pen, and whispered in his ear,

"Who gave him my letter this morning?"

"My lodger, sir," said Nadgett, behind the palm of his hand.

"How came that about?"

"I found him on the wharf, sir. Being so much hurried, and you not arrived, it was necessary to do something. It fortunately occurred to me, that if I gave it him myself, I could be of no further use. I should have been blown upon immediately."

"Mr. Nadgett, you are a jewel," said Montague, patting him on the back. "What's your lodger's name?"

"Pinch, sir. Mr. Thomas Pinch."

Montague reflected for a little while, and then asked:

"From the country, do you know?"

"From Wiltshire, sir, he told me."

They parted without another word. To see Mr. Nadgett's bow when Montague and he next met, and to see Mr. Montague acknowledge it, anybody might have undertaken to swear that they had never spoken to each other confidentially, in all their lives.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Jonas and the doctor made themselves very comfortable up stairs, over a bottle of the old Madeira, and some sandwiches; for the doctor having been already invited to dine below at six o'clock, preferred a light repast for lunch. It was advisable, he said, in two points of view: First, as being healthy in itself. Secondly, as being the better preparation for dinner.

"And you are bound for all our sakes to take particular care of your digestion, Mr. Chuzzlewit, my dear sir," said the doctor, smacking his lips after a glass of wine; "for depend upon it, it is worth preserving. It must be in admirable condition, sir; perfect chronometer-work. Otherwise your spirits could not be so remarkable. Your bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne, Mr. Chuzzlewit, as what's-his-name says in the

play. I wish he said it in a play which did anything like common justice to our profession, by-the-bye. There is an apothecary in that drama, sir, which is a low thing; vulgar, sir; out of nature altogether."

Mr. Jobling pulled out his shirt-frill of fine linen, as though he would have added, "This is what I call nature in a medical man, sir;" and looked at Jonas for an observation.

Jonas not being in a condition to pursue the subject, took up a case of lancets that was lying on the table, and opened it.

"Ah!" said the doctor, leaning back in his chair, "I always take 'em out of my pocket before I eat. My pockets are rather tight. Ha, ha, ha!"

Jonas had opened one of the shining little instruments; and was scrutinising it with a look as sharp and eager as its own bright edge.

"Good steel, doctor. Good steel! Eh?"

"Ye-es," replied the doctor, with the faltering modesty of ownership. "One might open a vein pretty dexterously with that, Mr. Chuzzlewit."

"It has opened a good many in its time, I suppose?" said Jonas, looking at it with a growing interest.

"Not a few, my dear sir, not a few. It has been engaged in a—in a pretty good practice, I believe I may say," replied the doctor, coughing as if the matter-of-fact were so very dry and literal that he couldn't help it. "In a pretty good practice," repeated the doctor, putting another glass of wine to his lips.

"Now, could you cut a man's throat with such a thing as this?" demanded Jonas.

"Oh certainly, certainly, if you took him in the right place," returned the doctor. "It all depends upon that."

"Where you have your hand now, hey?" cried Jonas, bending forward to look at it.

"Yes," said the doctor; "that 's the jugular."

Jonas, in his vivacity, made a sudden sawing in the air, so close behind the doctor's jugular, that he turned quite red. Then Jonas (in the same strange spirit of vivacity) burst into a loud discordant laugh.

"No, no," said the doctor, shaking his head: "edge tools, edge tools; never play with 'em. A very remarkable instance of the skilful use of edge-tools, by the way, occurs to me at this moment. It was a case of murder. I am afraid it was a case of murder, committed by a member of our profession; it was so artistically done."

"Aye!" said Jonas. "How was that?"

"Why, sir," returned Jobling, "the thing lies in a nut-shell. A certain gentleman was found, one morning, in an obscure street, standing upright in an angle of a doorway—I should rather say, leaning, in an upright position, in the angle of a doorway, and supported consequently *by* the doorway. Upon his waistcoat there was one solitary drop of blood. He was dead, and cold; and had been murdered, sir."

"Only one drop of blood!" said Jonas.

"Sir, that man," replied the doctor, "had been stabbed to the heart. Had been stabbed to the heart with such dexterity, sir, that he had died instantly, and had bled internally. It was supposed that a medical friend of his (to whom suspicion attached) had engaged him in

conversation on some pretence ; had taken him, very likely, by the button in a conversational manner ; had examined his ground, at leisure, with his other hand ; had marked the exact spot ; drawn out the instrument, whatever it was, when he was quite prepared ; and——”

“ And done the trick,” suggested Jonas.

“ Exactly so,” replied the doctor. “ It was quite an operation in its way, and very neat. The medical friend never turned up ; and, as I tell you, he had the credit of it. Whether he did it or not, I can’t say. But having had the honour to be called in with two or three of my professional brethren on the occasion, and having assisted to make a careful examination of the wound, I have no hesitation in saying that it would have reflected credit on any medical man ; and that in an unprofessional person, it could not but be considered, either as an extraordinary work of art, or the result of a still more extraordinary, happy, and favourable conjunction of circumstances.”

His hearer was so much interested in this case, that the doctor went on to elucidate it with the assistance of his own finger and thumb and waistcoat ; and at Jonas’s request, he took the further trouble of standing up in one corner of the room, and alternately representing the murdered man and the murderer ; which he did with great effect. The bottle being emptied and the story done, Jonas was in precisely the same boisterous and unusual state as when they had sat down. If, as Jobling theorised, his good digestion were the cause, he must have been a very ostrich.

At dinner, it was just the same ; and after dinner too ; though wine was drunk in abundance, and various rich meats eaten. At nine o’clock it was still the same. There being a lamp in the carriage, he swore they would take a pack of cards, and a bottle of wine : and with these things under his cloak, went down to the door.

“ Out of the way, Tom Thumb, and get to bed !”

This was the salutation he bestowed on Mr. Bailey, who booted and wrapped up, stood at the carriage-door to help him in.

“ To bed, sir ! I’m a going, too,” said Bailey.

He alighted quickly, and walked back into the hall, where Montague was lighting a cigar : conducting Mr. Bailey with him, by the collar.

“ You are not a going to take this monkey of a boy, are you ?”

“ Yes,” said Montague, “ I am.”

He gave the boy a shake, and threw him roughly aside. There was more of his familiar self in the action, than in anything he had done that day ; but he broke out laughing immediately afterwards ; and making a thrust at the doctor with his hand in imitation of his representation of the medical friend, went out to the carriage again, and took his seat. His companion followed immediately. Mr. Bailey climbed into the rumble.

“ It will be a stormy night !” exclaimed the doctor, as they started.

FROM THE NEW YORK HERALD,
(AMERICAN PAPER.)

"He hath created Medicine out of the earth, and he that is wise will not abhor them."—Eccl. xxxviii.

PARR'S LIFE PILLS.

The letters which are here given are from persons of the highest respectability and character. The Proprietors of PARR'S LIFE PILLS respectfully urge those invalids who have the slightest doubt of their accuracy, to visit the parties whose names are here given, or, where this is impracticable, to make the fullest investigation by letter, as they have kindly promised to answer all questions to those who desire further information.

To Messrs. Thomas Roberts & Co., 304, Broadway.

No. 7, Washington-street, Jersey City.

Gentlemen:—Your medicine named PARR'S LIFE PILLS having attracted a good deal of attention in our city, I purchased from Mr. Zabriskie, apothecary here, a 25 cent box, and attending to the directions printed on the wrapper round the box, I took the pills twice, and have already felt so much relieved of bile and heartburn, that sincere gratitude induces me to address you for the purpose of giving my testimony to their efficacy. I can only compare my health now to what it was before taking Parr's Life Pills, to being relieved from a violent attack of tooth-ache. Neither myself or family will ever be without a supply.

I am, gentlemen, yours gratefully,
JAMES MILLER.

Nov. 22d, 1843.

Mr. S. Towsey, Postmaster, of Joslin's Corner, Madison County, writes as follows:—

Gentlemen:—I have sold many boxes of PARR'S LIFE PILLS, and they have given universal satisfaction, and it is my candid opinion that they are destined to supersede all the other Pills now in use. The mild operation, and fine balsamic properties, will make them universal favourites. I have used the pills in my family, and find them to be an excellent medicine, and I shall recommend them accordingly.

Rochester, Nov. 9, 1843.

To Messrs. Thomas Roberts & Co., Proprietors of "Parr's Life Pills," 304, Broadway.

Gentlemen:—I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude and thanks for the benefit which, under Providence, my family and self have received from the use of your invaluable "Parr's Life Pills." I have used them constantly, in cases where every other medicine has failed to remove the most tormenting sufferings I experienced from habitual costiveness and bilious attacks, accompanied by dimness of sight and nausea, with complete prostration of the digestive functions. I am now completely recovered, as I believe, solely by the use of "Parr's Life Pills." Finding them so efficacious in my own case, my wife concluded to give them to our children, instead of the uncertain and ignorant prescriptions which are frequently recommended in the drug stores. I am happy to say, that notwithstanding the last summer was one of the most sickly and variable known in New York for many years past, yet my children did not suffer a single attack of summer complaint, which is so fatal to young children. I consider Parr's Pills the best medicine ever used, and free from the objections of violence of action and prostration of strength, to which all others I have used are liable.

You are at liberty to use my name, and on reference to me, I shall cheerfully confirm my opinion and experience

Respectfully,

CHAS. A. GRIGLIETTI,

Formerly of 44, Columbia-street, corner of Delancy, N. Y., now of 204, Broome-street.

Messrs. T. Roberts & Co.:—

No. 198, Christie-street.

This is to certify, that I have been afflicted for this twelve years with the liver complaint and dyspepsia, and after trying all advertised medicines—then had recourse to a doctor, who only patched me up. At last the kind hand of Providence pointed out to me the report of Parr's Life Pills; and after attentively and carefully taking a few small boxes, I began to feel like another being—and I ask my cure may be circulated through the United States, so grateful am I for my recovery from the grave.

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The above, with hundreds of other Testimonials, can be seen at the Proprietor's Office, 304, Broadway. This medicine can be purchased of all respectable Druggists through the United States.


TO THE PUBLIC.

An Injunction in the Court of Chancery of Massachusetts, was lately granted against George Roberts, of the *Boston Times and Notion*, Boston—(no way related to our Thomas Roberts)—for fraudulently attempting to issue a spurious article, as our far-famed and excellent Medicine, Parr's Life Pills. The Chancellor, Judge Story, after ordering the defendant, &c., into Court, ruled "that the injunction be made absolute in every point sought for"—being a severe animadversion on the conduct of the defendant. Although our Agents are constantly on the alert, and the great difficulty and expense of imitating our labels on and around our boxes of Pills, are strong safeguards, we are determined, at any cost, to protect ourselves from the cupidity of dishonest persons, and the public from the danger of a spurious imitation of our Medicine.

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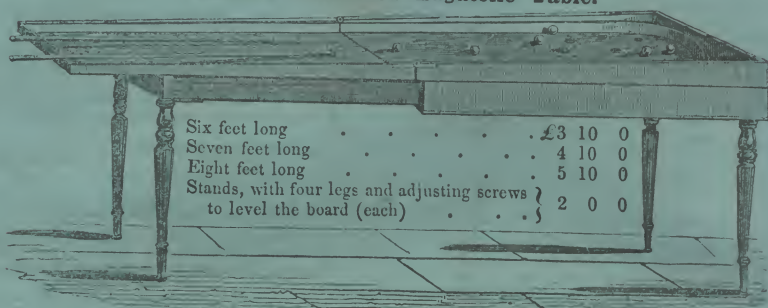
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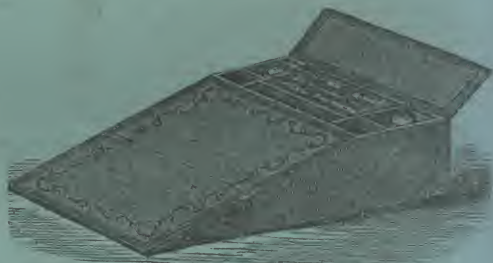


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